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# Howdy Ags!

So, the dog days of summer are here and it's time to review the '13-'14 sports year. Trying to come up with the top twelve stories of the year was a challenge because there were so many to choose from. The success we had really makes me look forward to the upcoming fall and spring. I want to congratulate the Women's Track Team for bringing home another National Championship and giving Aggie fans the perfect ending to an exciting year of Texas A&M sports.

Aggie football is right around the corner, and as the construction workers continue to work on the Kyle Field remodel, Coach Jackson is busy conditioning and strengthening our football team. Our coaches are evaluating and bringing in the best talent in the country. Even though games aren't being played, the excitement of a #YESSIR tweet helps keep fans thinking Aggie Football all summer long. The new phrase #WRTS (We Run This State) couldn't be more true! Just ask the folks in Austin.

Gig'em Ags!

*Rob '88*



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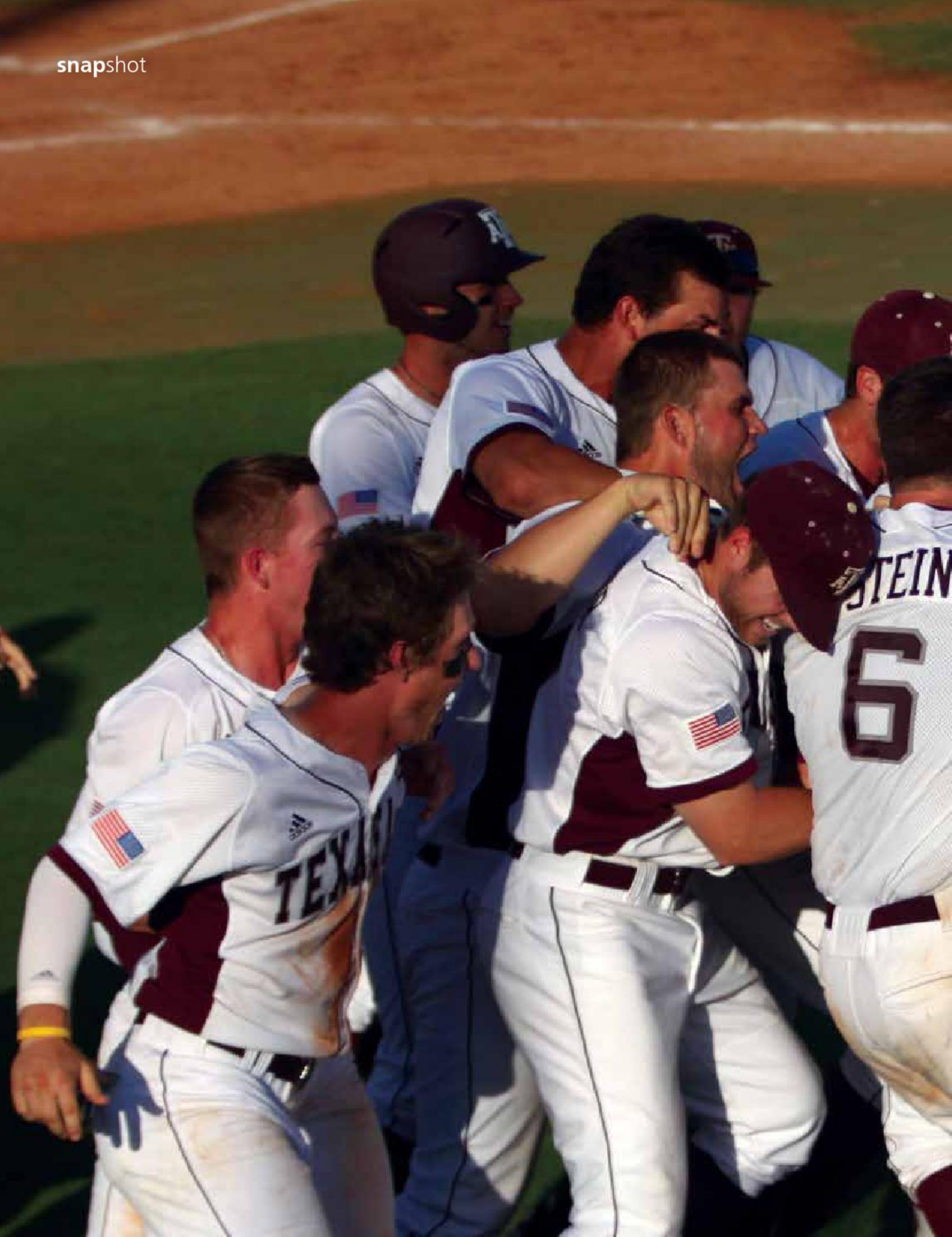
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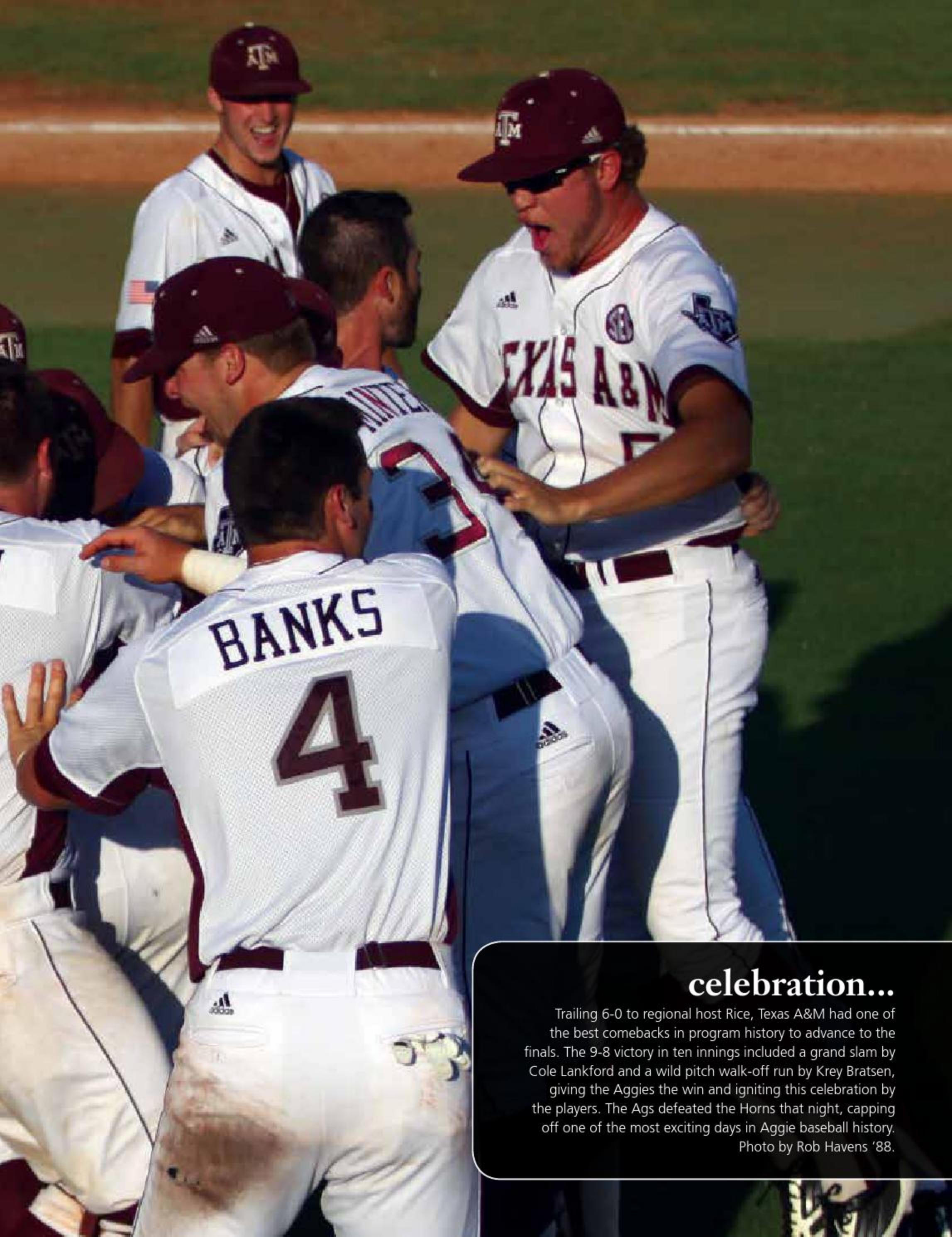
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snapshot







## celebration...

Trailing 6-0 to regional host Rice, Texas A&M had one of the best comebacks in program history to advance to the finals. The 9-8 victory in ten innings included a grand slam by Cole Lankford and a wild pitch walk-off run by Krey Bratsen, giving the Aggies the win and igniting this celebration by the players. The Ags defeated the Horns that night, capping off one of the most exciting days in Aggie baseball history.

Photo by Rob Havens '88.



## here...

Aggie great Rodney Thomas was one of the best running backs to ever wear the maroon and white. His 3,014 career rushing yards place him as the fifth best running back in A&M history. Thomas scored forty-one touchdowns from 1991-94, ranking him third all-time in rushing TD's. The Aggies won three straight Southwest Conference championships with Rodney in the backfield, and his success on the college gridiron resulted in a third round selection in the '95 NFL draft.

Thomas played seven years in the NFL. He passed away at the age of 41 and will be dearly missed.

Photo courtesy of Aggie Athletics.









snapshot



NCAA 2014 OUTDOOR CHAMPIONSHIP  
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## national champs...

For the fourth time in six years, the Aggie Women's Track Team won the team National Championship in Eugene, Oregon. The Men's & Women's teams have tallied eight championships since Coach Pat Henry arrived, creating a dynasty amongst the track and field world. The women scored 34 points on the final day to clinch the title, and in the process beat out the second place Longhorns to make the victory even sweeter!

Photo courtesy of Aggie Athletics.







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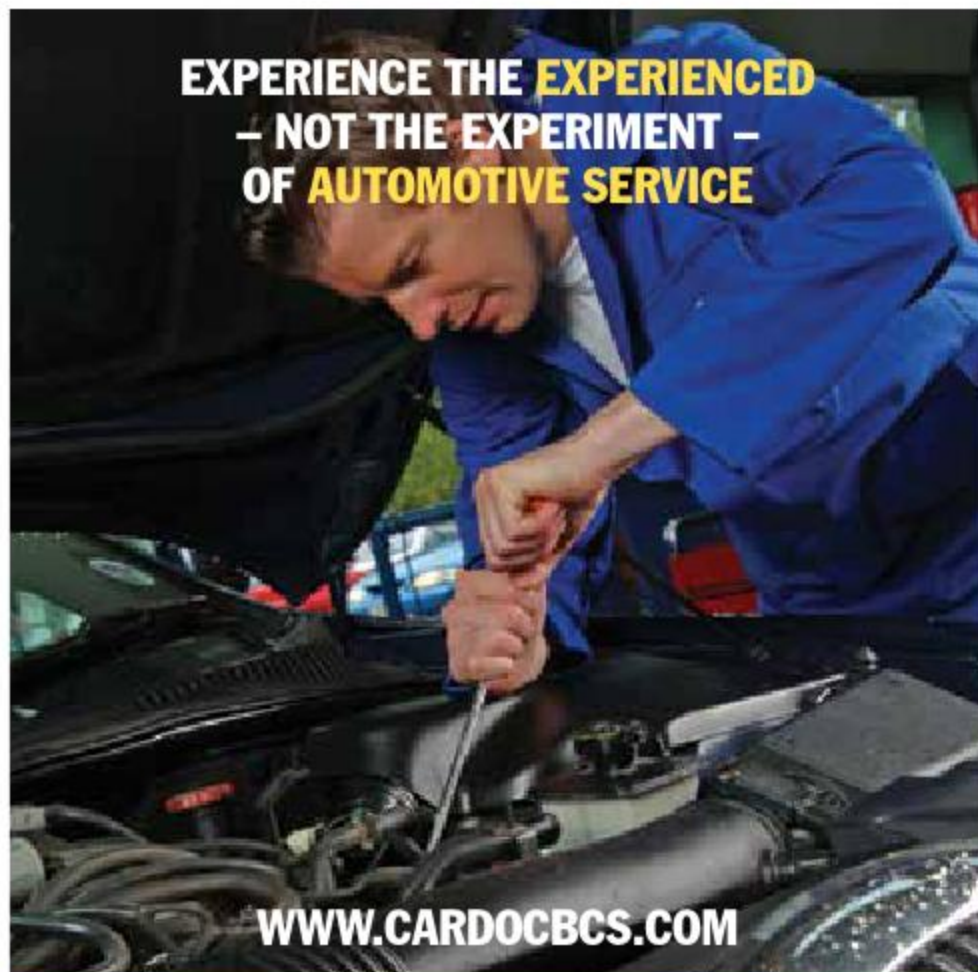
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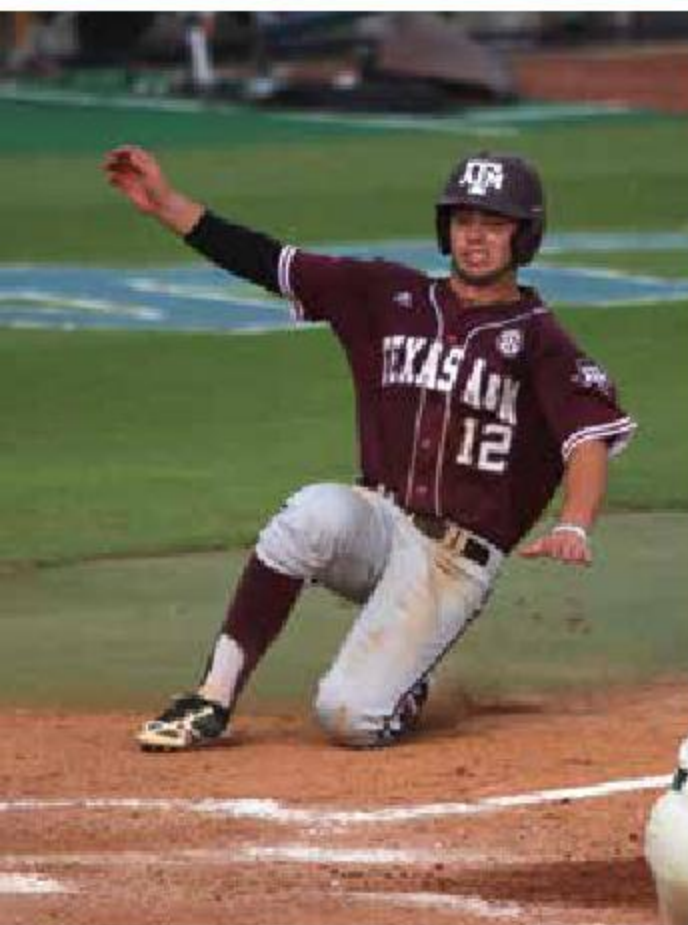
scoreboard



**Aggie Track & Field:** Texas A&M track won its eighth National Championship in six years this June, capping off the '13-'14 season for our athletic program. The women's team won its fourth team outdoor title, adding to the record-setting pace this team has established during the last decade. The success of the program can be directly linked back to its leader, Coach Pat Henry, who now has thirty-five NCAA team titles on his résumé. After the win, Henry said, "We did some things all the way through this meet that got us in a position to do what we did today." Reflecting on the final day, Henry stated, "Today always looks like you sprint this, or hurdle that, but today was a big cap off day. The ladies did very well in the two relays and 200 meters to win the team title." The men's team also had an excellent meet, finishing third in the country.







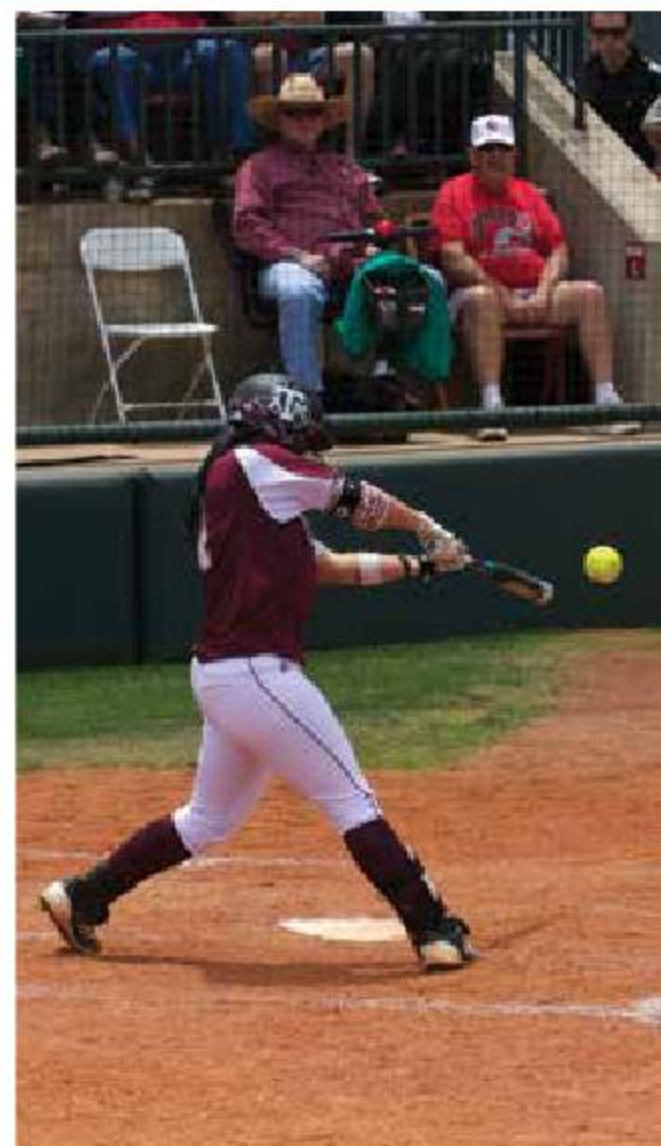
**Aggie Baseball:** The Aggie baseball team made its eighth straight appearance in the NCAA Tournament as they were invited to the Houston Regional hosted by the Rice Owls. In one of the strongest regionals in the country, the NCAA selected Texas and George Mason to join the Ags and Rice, creating a very competitive field. The Aggies lost their first game against Texas 8-1, sending them to the losers bracket and setting up a tough road to win the regional. The team's bats came alive with sixteen hits in a win vs. George Mason, allowing the Ags to advance to an elimination game vs. the host team, Rice. On a Sunday that will go down as one of the best in program history, the Ags trailed 6-0 to the Owls before Cole Lankford ignited a comeback with a grand slam. Texas A&M fought back and defeated Rice 9-8 in ten innings, setting up a rematch with the Horns. In the nightcap, Tyler Stubblefield pitched an amazing complete game with a 3-2 victory over the archrival Longhorns, giving Aggie Baseball one of the most memorable days in the history of the school. The celebration was short-lived, however, as the Ags lost 4-1 the following night, ending their season.







**Aggie Softball:** For the thirteenth straight season, Aggie Softball earned a spot in the NCAA Tournament. The team was selected to go to Norman where the seventh-seeded, defending National Champion Sooners awaited them, along with Hofstra and Bryant. In the first game against Hofstra, the Aggies battled to a 7-6 win in a game that see-sawed back and forth over the seven innings. All six Aggie seniors in the starting lineup contributed at least one RBI to the books as the women scrapped for the win. In game two against OU, the Ags suffered a heartbreaking 9-8 loss to the Sooners. Amber Garza hit a three-run homer and Cali Lanphear hit her second grand slam of the year, but it wasn't enough to beat the defending champs. In the elimination game, the Aggies rebounded to whip the Pride 7-0 and advance to Championship Sunday. Unfortunately, it was not to be, as the Sooners defeated the Ags 11-6 and closed the books on the Aggies' season.







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# 6 Things to take away from Spring Football

BY ROB HAVENS '88

**1.** The top story from spring football happened right after practices wrapped up. Long time backup and potential starting quarterback Matt Joeckel announced he would be leaving Texas A&M to pursue another school at which to play his final season of eligibility. Days later, a tweet from Joeckel confirmed his move to former Southwest Conference and current Big 12 team, TCU. His transfer turns the competition for the starting job at QB into a two-horse race between returning sophomore Kenny Hill and true freshman newcomer Kyle Allen. Coach Sumlin is not likely to name a starter until probably two weeks before the Ags' first game, giving both players the opportunity to prove that they are the man for the job.



**2.** The Aggie offense will look for veteran leadership from the backfield as Tra Carson, Trey Williams and Brandon Williams made strides in the spring, knowing their production will be key with a freshman or sophomore play caller. James White also looks to be a part of the mix as Coach Sumlin complimented the freshman on a "solid spring campaign".

**3.** "Jordan Mastrogiovanni had an excellent spring, stepping up in a leadership role and flying around doing some things he needs to do," according to Sumlin. The sophomore linebacker generated a lot of talk during the spring, and the Aggie defense hopes Jordan can continue the momentum he began in February as our defense takes the field this fall.

**4.** Coach Snyder was able to keep DeShazor Everett at corner

during spring ball. The versatile senior has been effective at both corner and safety, but keeping him at cornerback allowed Snyder to develop other players at the safety position. "We have to improve by position, and if we do that, we will improve collectively as a defense—and I think we made strides," said Sumlin.

**5.** The Aggie defense returns twenty-four players that made ten or more tackles last season. Coach Sumlin mentioned linebacker Shaan Washington and defensive linemen Hardreck Walker and Zaycoven Henderson as defensive players that showed well during drills and will be counted on in the fall to get opponents off the field. Snyder looks to leverage the experience gained from using young players last year to develop veteran players that can get results this year.

**6.** Our talented receiving corps, led by veteran Malcome Kennedy, added Speedy Noil and Josh Reynolds, who both made an immediate impact upon their arrival. With the return of Ricky Seals-Jones, the Aggies should have one of the best wide receiving teams in the country.



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top 12 So





# STORIES of the year



Looking back on Texas A&M athletics  
in 2013-2014, we give you our picks  
for the biggest stories of the year.

BY ROB HAVENS '88





## THE RETURN OF JOHNNY MANZIEL

---

Back in December of last year, Aggies around the world gathered around television sets to hear those amazing words, "The 2012 winner of the Heisman Memorial Trophy is Johnny Manziel." Echoes of screaming fans could be heard across Aggieland as Johnny shared hugs with family and friends before taking the stage to give his acceptance speech. Manziel followed up his history-making accomplishment by leading his team in a record-breaking performance over the Oklahoma Sooners in the Cotton Bowl a month later. The wave of excitement continued in the spring but came to an abrupt halt in the summer when allegations of cash for autographs threatened to end Johnny's collegiate career. After a grueling month of speculation, it was determined there had been an inadvertent violation of an NCAA rule and that Texas A&M and the NCAA had agreed that a half-game suspension was in order, which would bring the investigation to a close. This created one of the most special moments of the 2013 season. In the third quarter of the Rice game, as Johnny trotted out on the field for the first time, he was welcomed by one of the loudest roars of a crowd in Kyle Field history. Johnny picked up just where he left off the previous season, leading the team up and down the field and extending a seven point halftime lead to a convincing 58-31 final score. Our Heisman champion showed again what a special player he really is. Photo by Rob Havens '88.









## THE 2014 NFL DRAFT

May 8, 2014 was a historic day for Texas A&M as three Aggies were taken in the first twenty-two picks of the NFL Draft for the first time in program history. The Atlanta Falcons selected offensive tackle Jake Matthews with the sixth overall pick. Jake became the seventh Matthews to be drafted into the NFL and the highest selection in the family. With the seventh pick, the Buccaneers chose wide receiver Mike Evans. The highly coveted player became the first wide receiver in A&M history to be taken in the first round. The Cleveland Browns selected Johnny Manziel with the twenty-second overall pick, securing what Coach Sumlin called "the most exciting college football player I have ever seen." Manziel said, "I'm very excited to be a part of Cleveland and the Dawg Pound and the city and the love they have for the Browns." Johnny became only the second Aggie quarterback to be taken in the first round. No other Aggies were taken in the final six rounds, but the following players received free agent contracts after the draft: Travis Labhart, Texans; Toney Hurd Jr., Nate Askew and Steven Jenkins, Buccaneers; Nehemiah Hicks, Dolphins; Ben Malena, Cowboys; Otis Jacobs, Ravens and Derel Walker, Titans.



## THE COMEBACK

If you ask Aggie fans what the most memorable football game of the '13 season was, you are sure to get the same answer. The 2013 Chick-fil-A Bowl will go down in history as "The Comeback." Down 38-17 at halftime without a defensive stop in the first half, the Aggies looked like a defeated team. Fans around the country even turned off the game, not believing the Aggies could come back. The Aggie defense stepped up and started making stops and Johnny cranked up the offense, completing thirty of thirty-eight passes for 382 yards and four touchdown passes, along with 73 yards on the ground and a rushing touchdown. The Georgia Dome crowd was electric as the Aggies refused to lose. Toney Hurd Jr. made the biggest play of his Aggie career as he returned an interception 55 yards and gave the Ags their first lead of the night with 3:33 left in the game. Nate Askew sealed the victory on Duke's final drive with a game-ending interception. As confetti fell and the clock struck midnight on New Year's Eve, the Aggies celebrated the largest comeback in team history, 52-48.



## FOUR-TIME CHAMPS

The most decorated team on the Texas A&M campus added another National Championship award to its trophy case. The A&M women's track team captured their fourth National Championship in six years and the eighth overall when added with the four the men have won. Coach Pat Henry once again showed the nation how it's done as the Aggie Men also had a great finish, placing third in the championships. The Aggie Women scored 75 points, beating out their archrival Texas Longhorns, who finished second with 66 points. Shelbi Vaughn placed first in the discus to start off the meet, then the Aggies won the 4x100 relay for the sixth time in the last seven years. The Aggies' Kamaria Brown and Olivia Ekpone finished first and third respectively in the 200. There was only a twenty point margin between the top four teams, showing just how tight the team results were.



## ELITE AGGIES

Gary Blair's '13-'14 squad was ranked No. 13 in the first pre-season USA Today Coaches Poll. Although they were young by today's standards, this talented group of ladies had high expectations for the season. Led by senior Karla Gilbert at the post, the team battled through their difficult SEC schedule and earned a three seed in the NCAA Tournament. Jordan Jones, Courtney Walker and Courtney Williams delivered big-time for the team, comprising eighty-three percent of the team's scoring throughout the season and the tourney. The Aggies defeated North Dakota, James Madison and DePaul to advance to the Elite Eight. The Ags showed grit and determination throughout the tournament before finally being eliminated by eventual National Champion UCONN in the regional finals. The Aggies return the majority of their team next year and have already been ranked number four in one preseason poll as they prepare to make another run for a National Championship.



## VOLUNTEER KILLER

Two of the most exciting men's basketball games of the season involved one of our new conference foes from the east, the Tennessee Volunteers. In the first game in Knoxville, the Aggies trailed the entire game before the final basket. Falling behind by as many as fourteen points, it looked as if our men's orange-and-white opponent would cruise to an easy victory. Jamal Jones scored twenty of his game-high twenty-three points to lead the team back and bring the Aggies within striking distance. With less than fifteen seconds in the game and down by two points, Antwan Space had the ball and was trying to get it to Jones. With 4.4 seconds remaining, Space put up a three-pointer that gave the Aggies a one point lead and the victory. In the second game against the Vols, the two teams battled into overtime after Tennessee's Jarnell Stokes missed a game-winning free throw as time expired, which set up a second fantastic finish. With the game tied at sixty-five at the end of overtime, Antwan Space again found himself open with eight seconds left in the game. He calmly put up a three-pointer, knocking it down and giving the Ags the lead. On the ensuing play, Space stole the ball and secured the second last-second victory over the Vols.



## MEN'S TENNIS SEC CHAMPS

The Aggies traveled to Vanderbilt with a chip on their shoulder, believing they had let the regular season championship slip through their fingers. Determined to win the post-season tournament, the men began the tourney as the number two seed. After taking care of South Carolina in the first match, they defeated the No. 12 team in the nation, Kentucky, to make it to the championship match. Facing a Florida Gator team they had already defeated earlier in the season, the men felt confident they could bring home the championship hardware in the finale. The men were able to take the doubles point and an early 1-0 advantage, but the Gators recaptured the momentum quickly by claiming first-set victories on four of the six singles courts. Jackson Withrow then took a straight-set victory, giving the Aggies a 2-0 advantage. The Gators answered with two singles victories, knotting the competition 2-2. Shane Vinsant tallied the next point after, defeating his opponent on court two. The match for the championship was finally clinched as Jordan Szabo claimed a straight-set victory on court six to give the Aggies the SEC Championship.







## KYLE FIELD RENOVATION

After the final whistle sounded against Mississippi State and the fans filed out of Kyle Field, the redevelopment began. According to [kylefield.com](http://kylefield.com), it is "hands down, the largest and most extensive redevelopment project in the history of collegiate athletics. It will set new standards, redefine the collegiate football game day experience and create the most intimidating home-field advantage in college sports." The evenings are a little brighter in Aggieland as the lights of Kyle shine during the night so that workers can work around the clock in an effort to finish Phase 1 by the time the Aggies kick-off this fall. The construction crews have already made considerable progress, as you can see when driving by or checking out a picture released on social media. When completed before the 2015 season, it will hold 102,500 fans, making it one of the five largest stadiums in collegiate football. Photo by Rob Havens '88.









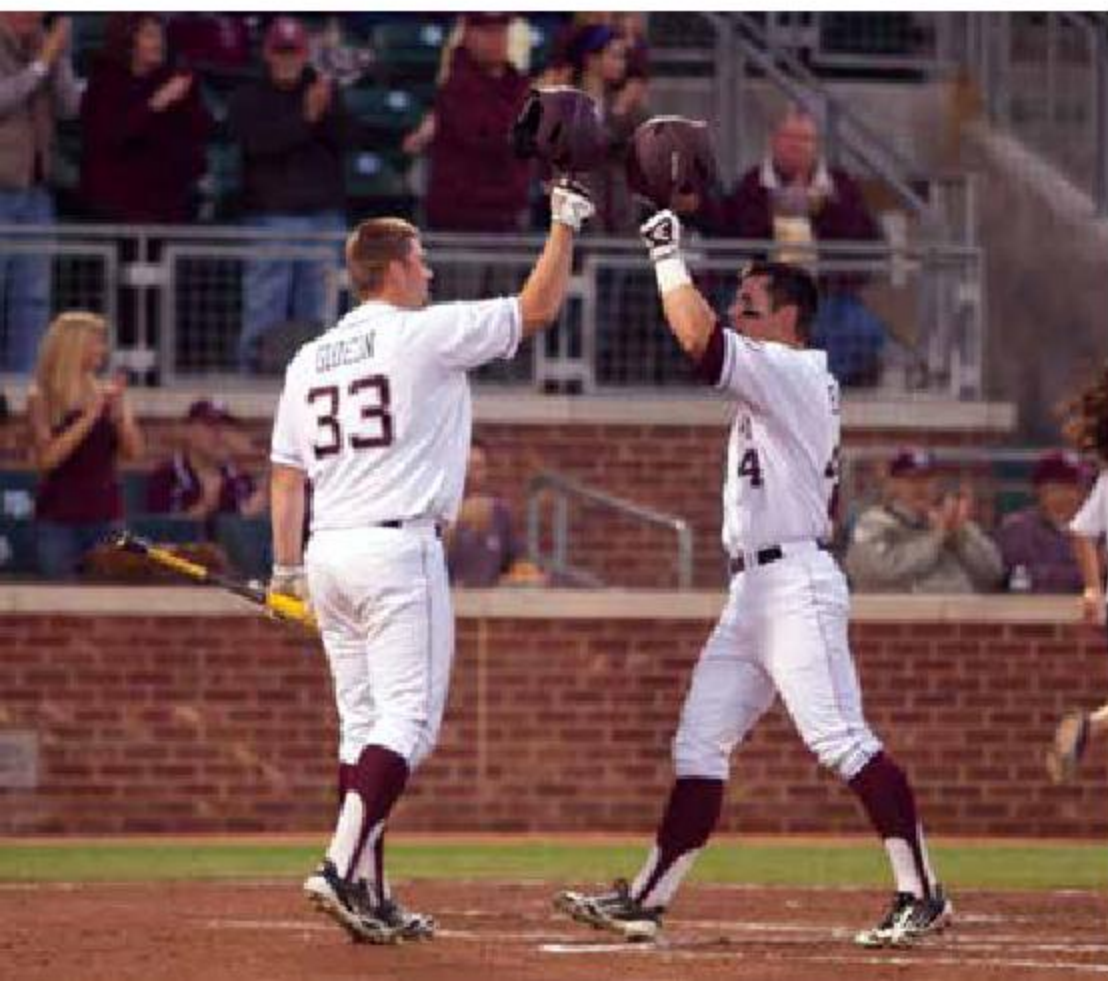
## 700TH WIN

On Friday, April 11, 2014 Texas A&M softball coach Jo Evans earned the 700th win of her Aggie career as the ladies upset the No. 4 Tennessee Vols on national TV. She also claimed her 1,000th career win the month before, making her the only coach in the SEC with 1,000 Division 1 wins. Competing in her eighteenth season at the helm of the program, Coach Evans has built Aggie Softball into a national contender. Evans has led the Aggies to twelve straight NCAA appearances since 2002. Under her leadership, the Aggies have won three Big 12 titles, made fourteen NCAA Regional appearances and five NCAA Super Regional appearances, with two trips to the College World Series and a National Runner Up finish in 2008. The Aggies have flourished under her leadership and look for continued success in the years to come.



## TOP 5 FOOTBALL RECRUITING CLASS

The Aggies signed a consensus top five recruiting class in February. The Ags' success on the gridiron has turned the heads of stellar athletes around the country, including the nation's number one recruit, 6'5", 250-lb. Myles Garrett, who signed this year and will be joining the Ags this summer. Also included in this year's class was the nation's number one quarterback prospect out of Desert Mountain High School in Scottsdale, AZ, Kyle Allen, who went through spring drills and will be competing for the starting job when camp opens this summer. Another jewel in this year's recruiting class crown is wide receiver Speedy Noil, who has turned heads in spring practice and should see meaningful playing time this fall at wide out and returning kickoffs. Coach Sumlin said, "This is a class that I think addresses our needs across the board." The twenty-two players the Aggies signed represent one of the best classes ever signed at A&M.



## BASEBALL'S 2500TH PROGRAM WIN

The Texas A&M baseball team upset the No. 7 Vanderbilt Commodores on April 11, 2014 to claim the 2,500th win for the program. The Ags became only the twelfth NCAA Division 1 program to reach this historic mark. They also became the first team in the SEC to claim that many wins. With storied programs like LSU and Mississippi State in the SEC, that's really saying a lot. Coach Childress has continued to carry the torch over the past nine seasons, collecting four Big 12 Championships and a trip to the College World Series to boot. The Aggies took two of three from the nationally ranked Commodores and also took two of three from No. 21 Mississippi State in Starkville. The Aggies have continued to battle through the toughest baseball conference in America this year, with seven SEC teams currently ranked in the top 25.



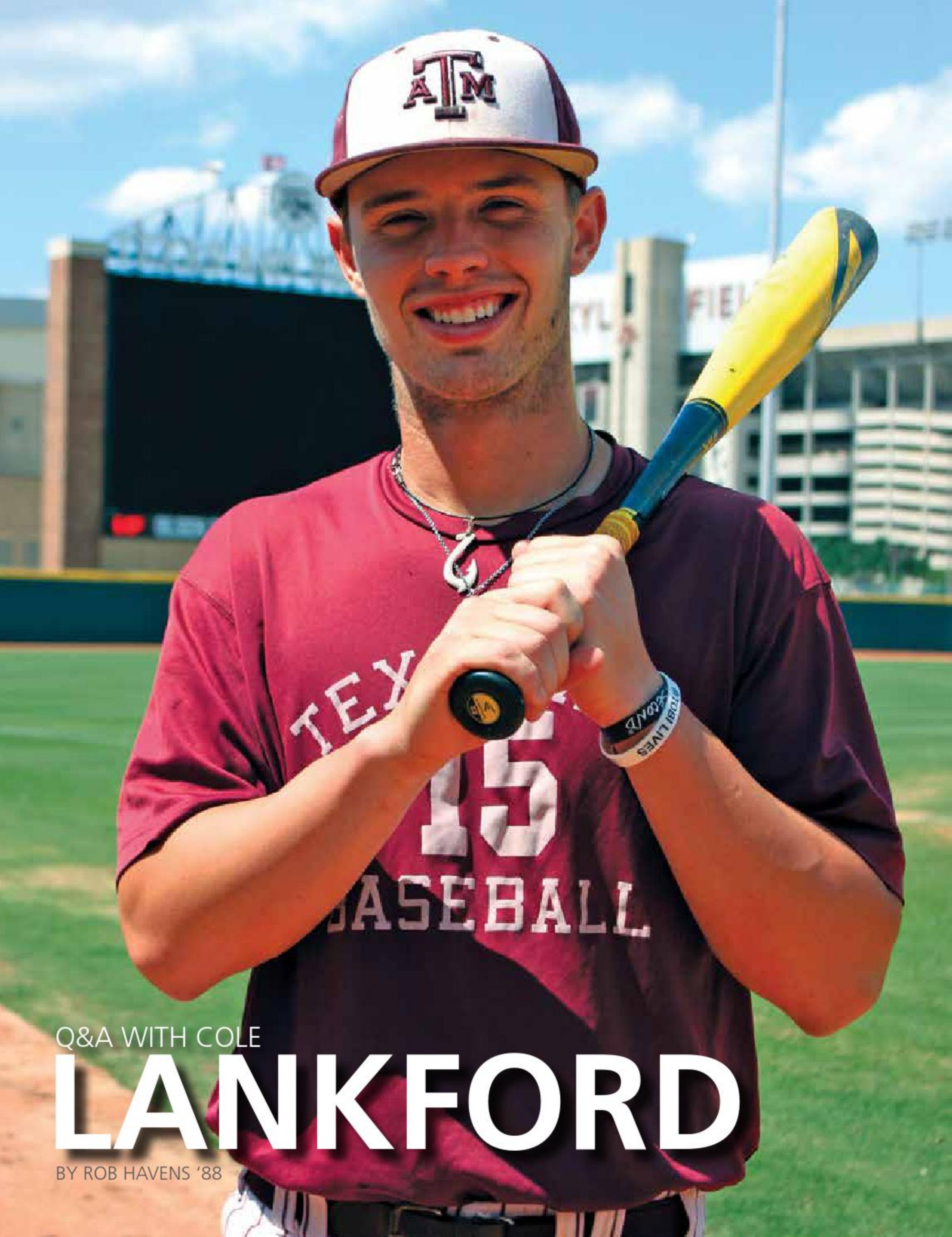


## SWEET 16 SOCCER TEAM

The Aggie soccer team had another successful season in 2013. The Ags claimed a share of their first ever SEC regular season title and then topped it off by winning the SEC Tournament Championship. The Aggies took care of the Utah Utes in the first round of the tournament in a 1-0 game that was decided in overtime. From there, the ladies had to go all the way to Chapel Hill, North Carolina to take on former Big 12 rival Texas Tech in the second round. The Aggies outlasted one of the toughest defensive squads in the nation, scoring a tying goal in the 84th minute by Shea Groom to tie up the match and send it into overtime. After two OTs, the teams fought it out in a shoot-out in which the Aggies prevailed by a score of 4-3, sending the ladies to a Sweet 16 match-up with the North Carolina Tar Heels. The Ags battled hard against the multi-winning national champs but wound up falling by the score of 2-0 on a cold day on their opponent's home field.







Q&A WITH COLE

# LANKFORD

BY ROB HAVENS '88



Tell me what brought you to A&M.

I guess what brought me here is the coaches believed in me. Coach Seely sent me an email. It was the most respectful email. He just believed in me more than any coach that talked to me. From there on out, this is the place I wanted to game.

Tell me about your first visit.

I came my junior year of high school for my first visit and just fell in love with the place. Coach Childress was so respectful to my family, just like he was to me. I just couldn't say no.

This has been an amazing year for you!

I'm just feeling good at the plate. I keep finding some holes. I mean, the guys we have behind me—Nick Banks, Troy Stein—it's so easy to hit in this lineup. Anyone can get the big hit, it's just awesome to hit in this lineup.

You're the hottest hitter in the lineup. What do you attribute that to?

I'm feeling good. Getting some good pitches to hit and putting some good swings on them. It's been a fun season, for sure.

What was your favorite moment of the season?

It's got to be the walk-off against LSU. That's probably the biggest moment of my life from a baseball standpoint. It was an awesome team win.



Tell me about your thought process going to the plate for that at-bat.

I honestly don't think at all. I have nothing on my mind. I'm just going up there to hit. I try not to think too much and that seems to help me a little bit. I just love playing baseball. It's a game. I have fun with it; you're either going to get a hit or get out. I'm going to go up there and have the best at-bat I can. I can't control the other part. I've been doing it since I was five years old; don't need to change anything. Just go out there and have fun.

What was your favorite series this year?

It's gotta be the LSU series. I mean, taking two big wins at home from a team that's top five in the country was huge for us and got the momentum going our way.

What was your favorite road trip this season?

I'd say Mississippi State. Those fans were unbelievable; the best fans I've played in front of on the road. They were all behind the outfield fence, giving us food after the game. They were on their feet for their players. It was awesome! That's a special place, and then, getting two wins out of that was even better.

You've played catcher, first and outfield. Which position do you prefer?

I can play kind of wherever they need me. However, I can help this team the most. Whatever that means.

Do you want to play the next level? Will you be back next year?

I mean the ultimate goal is to play in the Major League. I came to A&M to further my career and get better and make my way to the Major League. I know God has a plan for me and I trust it. I'm just taking

it day by day and enjoying every day out here because it's too much fun. It flies by.

What's your favorite Aggie Baseball tradition?

Section 203 and Stat Boy! I love the onesie! That's my favorite one, by far!

What is your favorite moment as an Aggie?

I would say freshman year, catching Michael Wacha on opening day. I don't know if anything will ever top that. It was pretty amazing.

What is your favorite tradition of Texas A&M?

I guess sawing off. I like doing that. I thought it was one of the craziest things I had ever seen before I got here, but now I love it.

What is the toughest place to play?

I guess Mississippi State; they were pretty rough on us. South Carolina was pretty tough; their fans got rowdy, but that was a lot of fun. I loved it!

Does that pump you up?

Yeah, that was awesome, but their fans go after us.


What's it been like playing for Coach Childress?


It's awesome. He's like a father figure to me. Playing for him is everything I could have wanted in college. He's helped me on and off the field. He's made me more of a man than I was coming here and he's helped shape me into the person I want to be. He's been one of the best blessings of my life.



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# BROWNS HAVE A GOLDEN TICKET

BY ROB HAVENS '88

**I have never been a huge NFL Draft fan** but with the prospect of three Aggies going in the first round, this year's draft became must-see TV. For five months I waited to see who would take Johnny Manziel. The rumor mill was all over the place as to where he would go. As I covered his pro day here in Aggieland, I listened to coaches and GMs being interviewed to see if I could gain any insight as to who might select him. I also watched mock draft after mock draft, wondering which NFL draft guru could tell me where he would go.

With the Texans holding the first pick, it seemed almost fitting that they would take him and keep the Texan born phenom only a short, 90-minute drive from Aggieland. I'm not a Texans fan, but with Johnny on the roster I would have been in a second. With one pick I believed they could change the whole dynamic of their franchise. Not only would they flip the majority of the fan base in the state of Texas, but the eyes of America would now be focused on the Lone Star State. The Texans marketing staff would be foaming at the mouth to sell ad space with Johnny

Football at the helm. Ticket sales, merchandise, signage and commercials would sell like hotcakes.

For months, I visited with Aggies that were all trying to figure out who would take him. As the draft approached, more and more experts predicted the Texans would take Jadeveon Clowney. They said he was a once-in-a-generation type prospect that you just couldn't pass up. A physical beast with lots of upside, and with a pro bowl bookend by the name of JJ Watt on the other side of the Texans defensive line, it was a no-brainer.

The experts kept saying that taking Manziel was a gamble. They said he was an amazing college player but questioned whether his skill set would transition to the NFL. Could he become a pocket passer? How healthy could he stay in the pros with his scrambling running style. Was he too short? Would his extracurricular habits affect the team? It seemed there were more questions than answers, and as the draft approached, the experts weren't sure where he would go.



Draft Day seemed to drag on forever as I waited for the picks to begin. I still was holding out hope that the Texans would take Johnny. Draft gurus started to predict that he would go to Cleveland at four. As a life-long Steelers fan, that wasn't what I wanted to happen. If the Texans took him, I'd get to watch him play every week. With over 300,000 Aggies in the Houston area pulling for them to draft him, a Texans owner that had said he wanted him, and billboards and websites enticing them to pull the trigger, I still thought it might happen. Plus, Clowney had a statistically bad year. It seemed as if he were more interested in staying healthy than winning, and he was out of shape and a non-factor in the first game I watched him play this season. There's no way the Texans will take Clowney, I tried to convince myself.

Roger Goodell stepped to the podium and said, "With the first pick of the 2014 NFL Draft, the Houston Texans select Jadeveon Clowney." I couldn't believe it. To say I was disappointed would be an understatement. It was like a kid waking up on Christmas morning, rushing to the tree, and the first present you open is a pair of socks. All those months of hoping and praying the Texans would take Johnny came to an abrupt stop. Now I wondered what other teams would do. The second pick of the draft was the Rams' pick, and all the experts had them taking Greg Robinson from Auburn. So, with little surprise, Goodell announced that they had. The following pick might be a landing spot for Manziel since the Jags were looking for a quarterback, but they, surprisingly, decided on Blake Bortles, making him the first quarterback taken and sending NFL war rooms scurrying to change their draft list to prepare for what would happen next.

At this point, I had pretty much resided myself to the fact that Johnny would be heading way up north to the long-time rival of my favorite team when Goodell stepped to the mic and announced that the Browns had traded their fourth overall pick to the Bills. What? I knew they weren't in line for a quarterback, so I thought maybe he'd go to the Raiders at five. Neither team selected a quarterback, and the experts started to wonder how far Johnny would fall.

Finally, with the sixth pick of the draft, I had something to celebrate. The Atlanta Falcons took OT Jake Matthews. Our living room erupted into cheers as Jake hugged his family, put on a Falcons hat, and strolled out to hug the commissioner. I was so happy for Jake and his family. We are so blessed that he returned for one more year and by what he did on and off the field for Texas A&M.

With the next pick in the draft, our celebration continued as the Tampa Bay Buccaneers chose Mike Evans. The house erupted into 'whoops' as Mike hugged his family and got emotional while holding his young daughter in his arms. The sky is the limit for Mike. He is so talented after only a few years of organized football, and he will be an amazing receiver for Coach Smith and the Bucs.

The Browns moved up a spot in the draft order and were the next to select. I thought to myself that maybe it wasn't a terrible move that they saved some money and picked up a couple more draft picks. Now they would take Johnny, making it three Aggies in a row. Wrong! They selected defensive back Justin Gilbert. At this point, I didn't know what to think. My phone was lighting up with texts asking me what was going on. Johnny was drinking



bottles of water like he'd just done a workout and all of the experts were scratching their heads.

I'm sure at this point Johnny was starting to compile a list of the teams that would regret not taking him. The next hour-and-a-half became the Johnny Manziel Draft Show as the camera flipped back and forth between Johnny and draftees as they received their good news and walked onto the stage. My heart was breaking for him, but at the same time, I was compiling a list of my own of teams that were making a huge mistake. When the Steelers went on the clock, I had ten minutes to imagine what Pittsburgh would look like with Johnny at the helm, but reality woke me up as they took a linebacker from Ohio State.

With the sixteenth pick, I knew the end was near. The highly unlikely opportunity for the Cowboys to keep Johnny Football in Texas had arrived. There was no way Jerry Jones could let





Manziel slip through his fingers. The experts agreed but also reiterated that the Cowboys were in desperate need of help on the defensive side of the ball. So, in Jerry Jones' typical decision making way, he took an offensive lineman. Wow! Had I stepped into The Twilight Zone?

Finally, after two hours and forty-five minutes, I received a tweet saying the Browns had moved up from their twenty-sixth pick to the twenty-second pick. I knew this is where they would take him, and they did. Johnny shared hugs with family and friends, came out on the stage and did his signature "money" sign with his fingers, and received the biggest response from the capacity crowd.

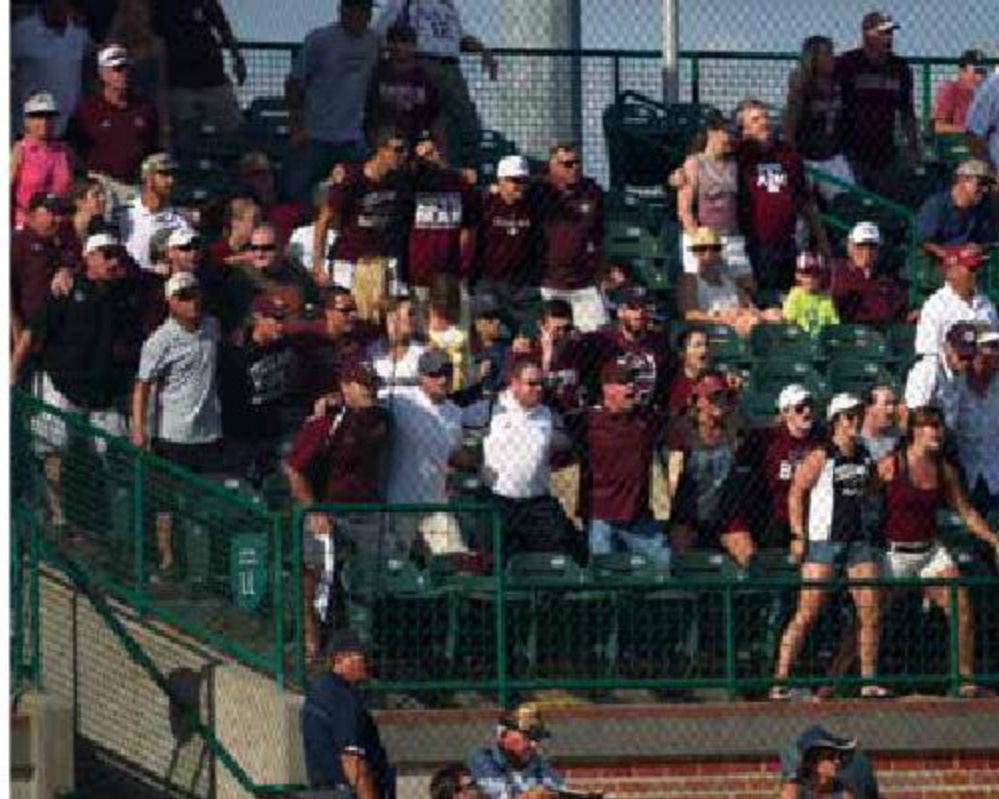
What an emotional roller coaster of an evening. I was happy that he got drafted, I was happy he went in the first round, and I was happy for Cleveland. No one has been this lucky since Charlie Bucket found a coin in the street drain, bought a

Wonka Bar, and found a golden ticket. With season ticket sales through the roof, the number one selling jersey in the NFL, and marketing dollars out the wazoo, the Browns have won the lottery—and all before Johnny even steps on the field! Plus, you can thank the other twenty teams that passed on him for making that chip on his shoulder the size of Texas. His whole life people have told him he can't do it, and he has shown time and time again that he can. Those twenty teams will now become a trivia question: "Can you name the teams that passed on Super Bowl winning, Pro Bowl participating, NFL MVP Johnny Football?"

I believe that what some coaches and GMs thought was a huge gamble will become one of the best investments the Browns will ever make, and they got him for a fraction of the cost he will go for in five or six years. I am excited to see what he does in the NFL. For this lifelong Steelers fan, the addition of Johnny Football has made me a Browns super fan!

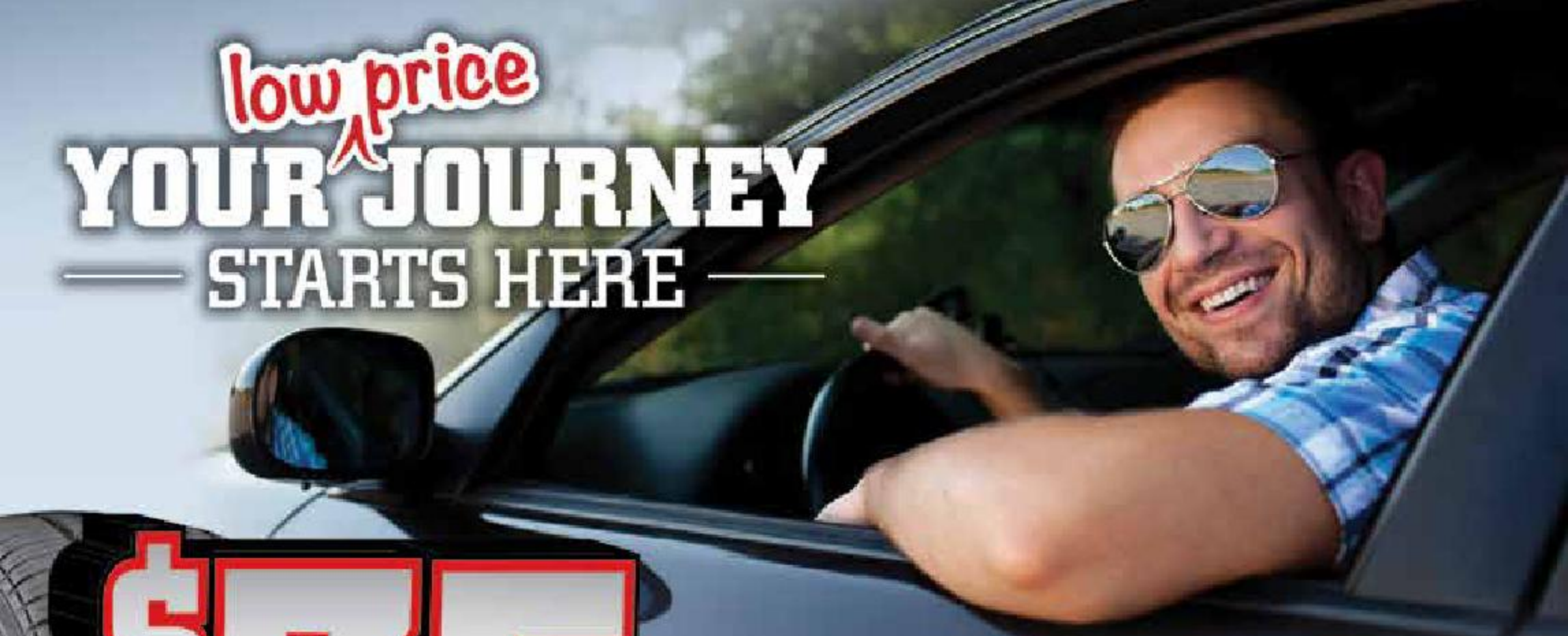


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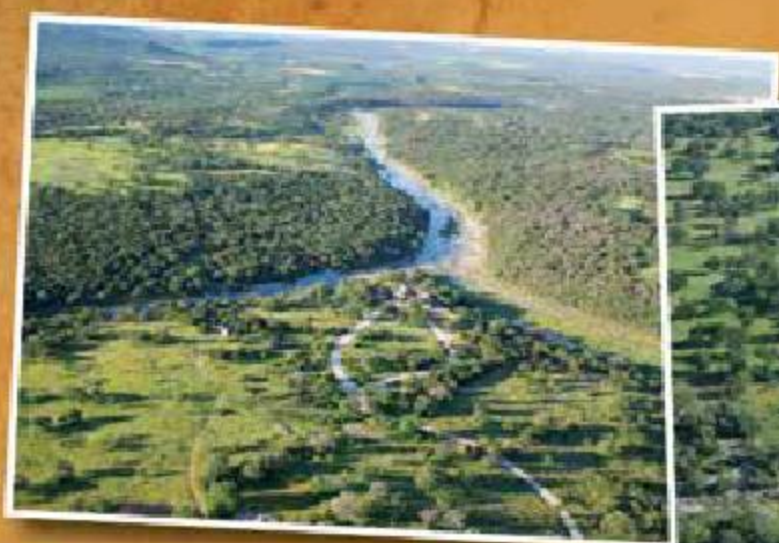


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